MARYLAND 197

PROJECT NEWSLETTER

PROJECT PLANNING STUDY

SPRING 2007

ALTERNATES PUBLIC WORKSHOP

The Alternates Public Workshop held on December 12, 2006 at the Bowie City Hall was attended by nearly 85 interested project stakeholders. An Alternates Public Workshop brochure, which explained project details, alternatives and typical sections, and included a brief questionnaire, was sent to thousands of project area residents prior to the workshop. Workshop stations included a project overview, the purpose of the meeting, the project planning process, the project Purpose and Need, other related projects in the Bowie area, alternatives under consideration, an environmental summary, information on right-of-way assistance, and SHA's noise policy.

The following four alternatives were presented at the Alternates Public Workshop:

- Alternative 1: No-Build – minor short-term improvements that occur as part of routine maintenance and safety operations.
- Alternative 2: Transportation System Management/ Transportation Demand Management (TSM / TDM) – TSM components include traffic signal improvements, minor roadway widening and intersection improvements. TDM strategies include improvements to transit service, telecommuting, staggered work hours, and carpooling, which are ongoing programs in the project area.
- Alternative 3: Five-Lane Typical Section – a five-lane section that would match MD 197 north of the project limits, including a 13-foot-wide center-turn lane, 11-foot-wide inside travel lanes and 16-foot-wide bicycle-compatible outside travel lanes.
- Alternative 4: Four-Lane Typical Section with Median - a four-lane divided section with a 20-foot-wide raised-grass median, including an 11-foot-wide inside travel lane and 16-foot-wide bicycle-compatible outside travel lane in each direction.

At the Workshop, citizens were able to visit each station and speak with study team members assigned to represent each aspect of the project. During and after the meeting, members of the public returned survey questionnaires stating their opinions about the study and the alternatives. An analysis of the comment cards indicated a clear preference for a Build Alternative; both reconstruction alternatives (Alternatives 3 and 4 listed above) received strong support, with Alternative 3 receiving slightly more support. Very few respondents favored the No-Build or TSM/TDM Alternatives.

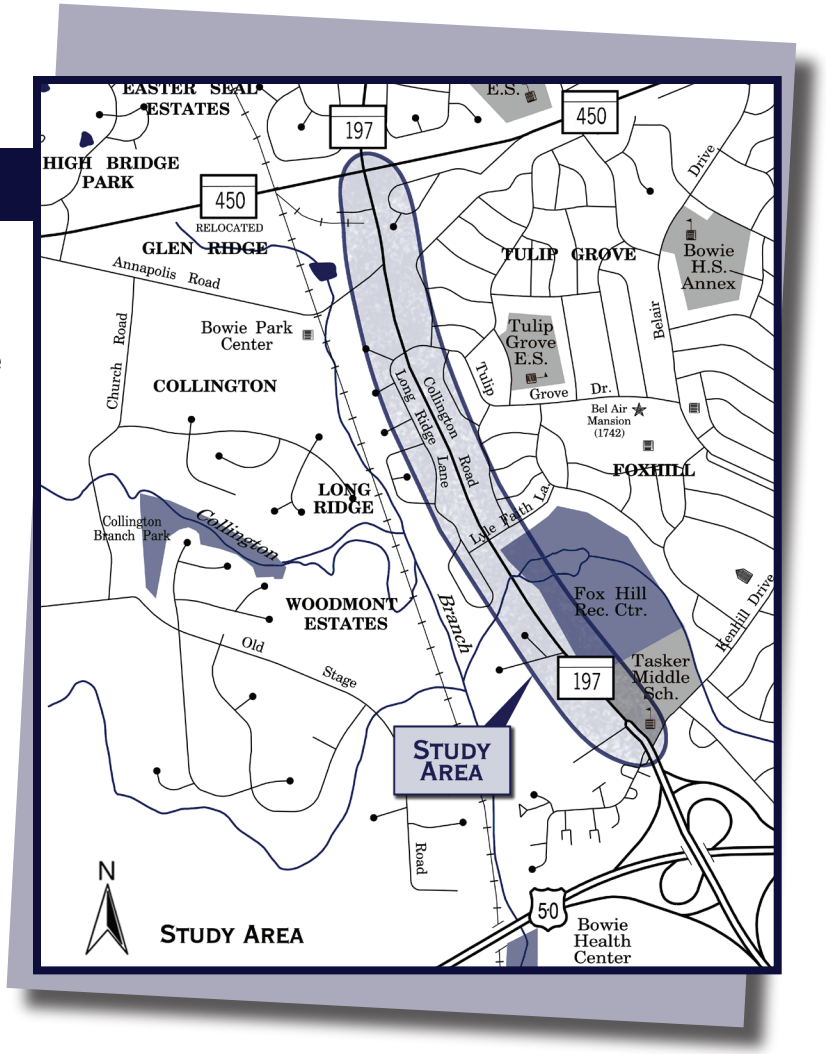
During the workshop and in survey responses, citizens expressed concern over median width, the on-roadway bicycle lanes, and the operation and safety of the project area intersections. Citizens also expressed concerns about increased roadway noise, impacts to residential properties and mature trees, and the rural feel of the roadway corridor. These comments were used by the study team to identify the alternatives to be retained for detailed study and will also be used as detailed engineering and environmental studies progress.

MD 197 STUDIES CONTINUE

The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) continues to develop strategies to improve MD 197. Each project planning study begins with a scoping phase that includes the development of the project's Purpose and Need Statement and preliminary alternatives intended to address those transportation needs. The last edition of this project newsletter focused on the draft Purpose and Need Statement. This issue of the MD 197 Project Newsletter includes the latest information about the alternatives developed, the recent Alternates Public Workshop, the activities that have occurred since the Workshop, and information about the upcoming detailed studies.

The Alternates Public Workshop held in December 2006 provided an opportunity for the study team to share information with stakeholders and receive valuable feedback that helped shape the study's scoping phase. Based on feedback on the Purpose and Need Statement, from the workshop, and from comments received from environmental and regulatory agencies, three alternatives have been retained for detailed study (see page 2). The study team has begun environmental and engineering studies for these alternatives.

ALTERNATIVES
RETAINED FOR DETAILED STUDY



As noted, four alternatives were presented at the Alternates Public Workshop: Alternative 1: No-Build, Alternative 2: Transportation System Management/ Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM), Alternative 3: Five-Lane Typical Section, and Alternative 4: Four-Lane Typical Section with Median. The MD 197 study team evaluated community and environmental impacts and traffic operations of these four alternatives, then used comments from regulatory agencies and the public to identify Alternatives 1, 3, and 4 as the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS). The study team decided to remove Alternative 2, TSM/TDM, from further consideration as a stand-alone alternative because this alternative would not provide traffic relief necessary to meet the project Purpose and Need. However, many of the features of Alternative 2, such as intersection improvements, have been combined with the two Build Alternatives. The ARDS are described below:

ALTERNATIVE 1

No-Build

The No-Build Alternative, which includes minor short-term improvements that occur as part of routine maintenance and safety operations, has been retained, although it does not substantively meet the project Purpose and Need. The No-Build Alternative will serve as a baseline for comparison with other proposed alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE 3

5-Lane Typical Section

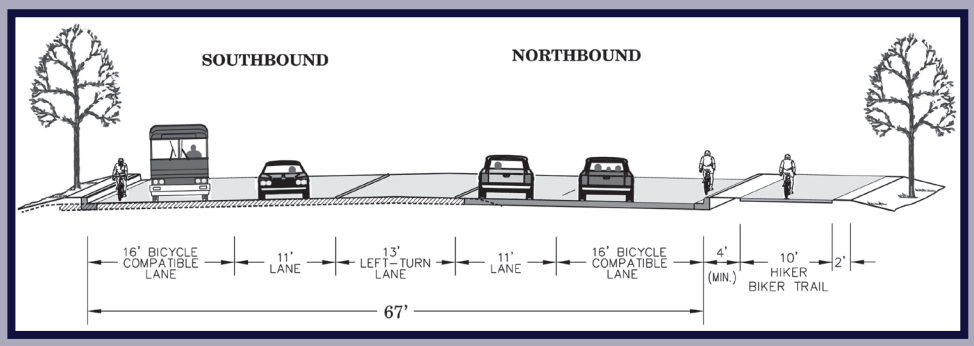
This alternative would closely match the section of MD 197 north of the project limits. This alternative includes a 13-foot-wide center-turn lane throughout, with 11-foot-wide inside travel lanes and 16-foot-wide bicycle-compatible outside travel lanes. On the northbound side of the roadway, a minimum distance of four feet would separate the roadway from the existing or reconstructed 10-foot-wide hiker/biker trail. This alternative would include new turning lanes and additional travel lanes at MD 450 Relocated and Kenhill Drive to improve operations and safety at those intersections.

In addition, this alternative would include TSM/TDM components such as traffic signal improvements and intersection improvements. TDM strategies such as improvements to transit service, telecommuting, staggered work hours, and carpooling are ongoing efforts in the project area and will also be considered as detailed studies proceed.

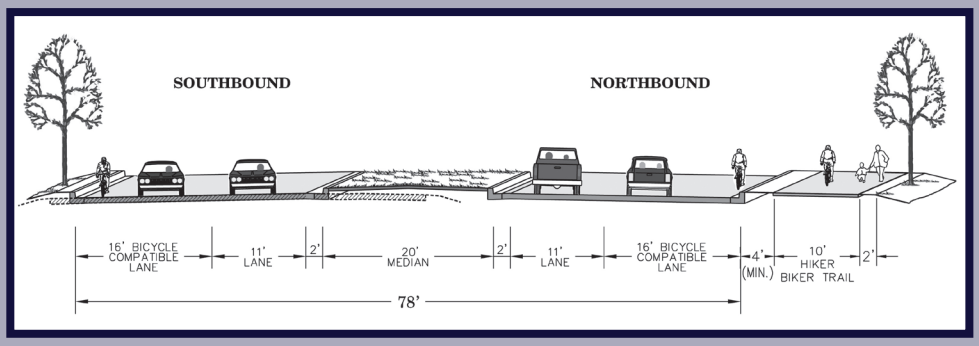
ALTERNATIVE 4

4-Lane Typical Section with Median

This alternative consists of a four-lane divided section with a 20-foot-wide raised-grass median. This alternative would include an 11-foot-wide inside travel lane and a 16-foot-wide bicycle-compatible outside travel lane for the northbound and southbound directions. Left-turn lanes would be provided at the intersections within the 20-foot-wide median. Curb and gutter would be provided along the outside travel lanes and along the median. On the northbound side of the roadway, a minimum distance of four feet would separate the roadway from the existing or reconstructed 10-foot-wide hiker/biker trail. This alternative would include new turning lanes and additional travel lanes at MD 450 Relocated and Kenhill Drive to improve operations and safety at those intersections. In addition, this alternative would include the same TSM/TDM components described for Alternative 3.



Alternative 3 - 5-Lane Typical Section



Alternative 4 - 4-Lane Typical Section

DETAILED ALTERNATIVES STUDIES

The ARDS process marks the transition between the scoping and detailed study stages of the project. As part of the detailed studies, study team representatives will conduct field investigations in the project area that may require access to properties along the corridor. In these cases, SHA will notify property owners and seek their permission before team representatives enter private property. The remainder of this newsletter details the planning activities that will take place in the coming months and through the summer of 2009. A project timeline is included on the back page of this newsletter.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2007, the study team will conduct the following activities:

- Develop detailed engineering for each alternative carried forward for detailed study
- Quantify the extent of impacts to socioeconomic, cultural, and natural environmental resources
- Develop avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures for impacts

Engineering work will include more detailed investigations of ways to reduce impacts to resources and property. Environmental studies will include firm delineations of resource boundaries and their values and functions. These technical studies will be used to prepare an environmental document. Members of the study team may need to conduct investigations in the field as part of these detailed studies, and may require access to properties along the corridor. As mentioned previously, in these cases, SHA will notify property owners and seek their permission before SHA representatives enter private property. As these field studies progress, the team will meet with communities to elicit feedback.

NEXT STEPS

The following steps are needed to complete the Project Planning Process:

- Complete detailed engineering for ARDS (Fall 2007)
- Complete Environmental Studies and hold Location / Design Public Hearing (Spring / Summer 2008)
- Address Public Hearing comments
- Coordinate with Federal and State environmental resource agencies throughout the process
- Identify the SHA Preferred Alternative and Conceptual Mitigation (Fall 2008)
- Receive Location / Design Approval (Summer 2009)

WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

The study team is committed to keeping citizens informed throughout the Project Planning Study. The study team invites communities to attend individualized meetings scheduled at the communities' requests. We welcome your questions and comments. For more information, please contact the study team at PG691@sha.state.md.us or visit our website at www.marylandroads.com and click on projects.

How to Contact the Study Team

Public input in the project planning process is encouraged. Public meetings will be scheduled at major milestones to provide the latest information and receive feedback.

If you would like to be added to the project mailing list, please email your name, mailing address, and email address to PG691@sha.state.md.us or contact the project manager as indicated below.

Written comments / requests may be submitted to:

Ms. Felicia L. Alexander
Project Manager
Mail Stop C-301
State Highway Administration
P.O. Box 717
Baltimore, Maryland 21203-0717

To speak with members of the Project Team, please call 410-545-8511 or toll free 1-800-548-5026.

Project Schedule

SHA State Highway Administration
Maryland Department of Transportation

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lieutenant Governor
John D. Porcari, Secretary
Neil J. Pedersen, Administrator

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